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Appropriations - DDS

Good afternoon! I am Tony Candelaria, a nurse, and proud DDS employee for almost 30 years. I am here to talk about the cuts the Governor has proposed to DDS in his budget.

I consider myself a strong family man. I have 5 incredible children and 7 beautiful grandchildren. But my family doesn't stop there... for the past 30 years, my family has also included the people with developmental disabilities we care for every day.

Ask any DDS employee, resident, or their family member; and they will tell you of the family bond we all share. This is a critical component of the health and well-being of every individual in our care.

The act of under-funding and privatizing DDS is morally and ethically wrong. Just ask yourself, would it be ok to pluck a healthy child out of their home and family and raise them differently because it's cheaper? Then why would we do this to people with disabilities who lack the ability to voice their own concerns? Always remember that at any moment in our lives, the people we take care of could be our own family members.

Several years ago, I worked in a group home with people with severe developmental disabilities. I was there when the home underwent privatization. The new supervisor was just 19-20 years old; very immature, with little to no training or experience with the people with developmental disabilities. You wouldn't want that for you or your family. It is important to note that one of the residents in that group home had to return to state care because the private agency was unable to handle her needs.

In the words of Winston Churchill, "You measure the degree of civilization of a society by how it treats its weakest members."